



Guidance for Managing Situations where a Student's Work Placement may need to be Terminated

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Managing Situations where a Student's Work Placement may need to be Terminated

PURPOSE

This document provides guidance on how to address situations where, for reasons that may or may not be within the control of the student, their work placement may need to be terminated. Underlying this policy is a desire to ensure continued support for the student's professional development and progression through their chosen programme of study and to safeguard the interests of all parties who are involved in the placement process. However these guidelines do not apply to professional courses such as Social Work, Physiotherapy, Education, etc. where placement is a compulsory element of the degree programme.

This guidance is aimed at placement and academic staff with the authority to recommend or take action in situations notified to them by colleagues, students or placement providers. It is intended to apply to a wide range of placement activity whether within the UK or abroad. It focuses on the primary reasons why a placement may need to be terminated and how the University should respond in each case.

OVERVIEW

This guidance is in two parts. The first part will outline situations that may typically occur in work placement practice. The second part proposes a protocol for resolving problems and documenting action taken in such situations.

In every case this guidance is to be interpreted with appropriate attention to the requirements of legislation and any internal and external regulatory requirements (e.g. those of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies). Appendix 1 makes reference to appropriate sections of the QAA Quality Code and relevant Brunel University London policies.

PART 1: COMMON SITUATIONS WHERE WORK PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES MAY BE ENDED

(i) Student is unable to fulfil placement requirements for reasons of health or well-being

The health and wellbeing of the student may prevent them meeting the attendance requirements of their placement or undertaking required duties. In these cases advice may be sought from a range of sources including Fitness to Practice Procedures, Occupational Health staff within the University, the employer providing the learning opportunity or the Student Union / Student Support services. It may be possible to adjust duties, altering the timing of the placement period and hours of work to take account of illness. Where this is not possible, the decision to end the placement should be made in line with recommended practice outlined in **Part 2**.

(ii) Student is subject to unacceptable risk

This could include unacceptable health and safety risks, excessive harassment (from business/service users or work colleagues), or the threat of violence to the student or their family. In such a situation it should be clear that the University representative has the authority to remove the student from this environment.

To ensure an audit trail, it is recommended that any concerns raised are recorded in a report kept by the Professional Development Centre or the relevant academic department and consideration is given to the recommended practice outlined in **Part 2**.

(iii) Student is provided with inadequate learning opportunities

As the placement proceeds it may become obvious that, for a number of reasons, the student cannot be provided with sufficient learning opportunities. Any member of the placement partnership may raise this issue. At this point a tripartite meeting should be called to examine the difficulties and set out a plan of action, including a review date to address the situation.

The decision to withdraw should be made only when remedial action taken has proved to be unsuccessful. In consideration of the impact (accreditation or professional recognition) on the associated programme of study, an alternative placement should be explored and made available to the student as soon as is feasible. The suitability of any alternative, in respect of timing and learning outcomes, will be at the discretion of the university programme team and programme regulations.

iv) The placement provider faces restructuring or changes business practice in a way that adversely affects the student

This is similar to iii) above in that further learning is prevented. It includes redundancy or changes to business practices that contravene University standards (e.g. a change from paid to unpaid employment). It may have become obvious that, for reasons beyond the control of the student, the placement cannot continue and as a result either the University or the provider brings the placement opportunity to an end.

In consideration of the impact (accreditation or professional recognition) on the associated programme of study, an alternative placement opportunity should be explored and made available to the student as soon as is feasible. The suitability of any alternative, in respect of timing and learning outcomes, will be at the discretion of the university programme team and programme regulations.

v) Difficulties arise as a result of the relationship between the student and the placement supervisor

Underpinning the placement should be satisfactory professional working relationships that support student development. Where these are not in place it is hoped that, in the first instance, difficulties can be resolved within the context of the supervisory relationship. Should this not be the case, the internal support mechanisms of the placement provider should be applied to resolve the situation.

Where it is noted that the situation is not improving and adversely affecting the ability of the student to progress, consideration should be given to recommended practice outlined in **Part 2** for ending the placement.

vi) Concern is expressed with regard to the conduct and/or practice of the student

Should there be a cause for concern with regard to the conduct and/or practice of a student the University should consider this under its University Code of Conduct or Fitness to Practice Procedures which detail the procedures for investigation and decision-making in matters where the conduct and/or practice of students is questionable.

NOTE: The student should be aware that any decision to end a placement might result in their having a gap before their studies can continue. An alternative learning opportunity may be provided to the student as soon as is feasible although the timing of this will be subject to availability. In a situation where another placement cannot be sought, the student has the option to exclude their placement year and graduate as a full time student.

PART TWO: RESOLVING AND DOCUMENTING ACTIONS TAKEN IN ENDING THE PLACEMENT

Part Two of this guidance outlines procedures to be followed to determine if termination of the placement is appropriate. The procedures aim to ensure that the relevant parties are advised of the situation in a timely manner and that actions are progressed in a logical sequence.

Where possible it is hoped that one initial enquiry will take place and will act as a means for various organisations to determine their own actions following its findings. Therefore it envisages close communication between all agencies that may be required to take action as a result of the enquiry and/or its findings.

This does not preclude nor prevent any organisation instigating their own enquiry/investigation at the same time, nor subsequently, should they feel this to be necessary.

This process is illustrated in Appendix 2 – Workflow.

Stage 1 - Information is received

Information may be received by the University from the student or the placement provider.

Stage 2 - A consultation meeting will take place (normally within an agreed timeframe of 5 working days).

This will consider:

1. The nature of the information and its seriousness.

2. The steps to be undertaken and by whom to determine the validity of the information.
3. Whether suspension of the placement should occur or continue while the enquiry is ongoing. The University should also consider whether it wishes to place the student on suspension.
4. A timetable for the enquiry should be agreed to include the setting up of a meeting to consider the findings.

Other areas for consideration will be determined dependent on the particular case in question. Those invited to this meeting should include representatives from each of the organisations involved (This meeting would not normally include the placement student). A report is written and considered at Stage 3.

Stage 3 - Following the enquiry and completion of a report

A meeting will be held to consider the report, which will have been shared in advance with the student. This meeting will then determine whether the placement should continue or be terminated.

This meeting will normally occur within the agreed timeframe of 5 working days of the meeting at stage 2.

As a result of this determination there may be further actions taken by the University and the placement provider. Equally there may be no action to be taken as the information received may be found to be false or not as serious as first believed.

Stage 4 - Where the meeting at Stage 3 confirms concerns, the formal report of the decision will be communicated to all parties within the agreed timeframe

Where it is decided under Part 1 or Part 2 that the student's placement should be terminated, but that s/he will be provided with a further placement opportunity, then information with regard to the premature ending will be communicated to the student and next actions agreed.

APPENDIX 1 – POTENTIAL REFERENCE POINTS FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Staff may find the following sections of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) particularly helpful when developing or delivering a programme that includes work based or placement learning:

- **B3: Learning and teaching** should be helpful for practitioners in appreciating the resources, environment, experiences and stakeholder responsibilities required for placement learning opportunities.
- **B4: Enabling student development and achievement** should be helpful for practitioners in appreciating the support required for placement learning and the contribution it makes to the wider student experience.
- **B10: Managing Higher Education provision with others** should be helpful for practitioners in appreciating the nature, complexity, and potential issues in any arrangements with placement providers and should help in establishing a sound management framework.
- **B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning** and in **Part C: Information about Higher Education provision** might also be helpful when developing and establishing practice.

In all cases, this guidance should be applied in combination with the range of policies and guidelines developed by the University including:

- University Placement Learning Policy
- Departmental Placement Module 2555 Study Guide
- Professional Development Centre Pre-Placement Module 2554 Handbook
- Work Placement and Equality Policy
- Work Placement Code of Practice – Health and Safety Policy/Health and Safety Risk Awareness and Induction Checklist
- Insurance Indemnity Guidance

Other external guidance:

- Placing students in international settings: UKCISA Outward student mobility guidance: <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Info-for-universities-colleges--schools/Info--guidance/Codes-and-guidance/Outward-student-mobility-from-the-UK/>
- UCEA Health and Safety Guidance for the placement of Higher Education students – 2009 edition. Online at: <http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/HSplace>
- Health and Safety for Student Placements 2010, ASET Good Practice for Placements Guides – Volume 3

APPENDIX 2 - WORKFLOW ILLUSTRATING PROCESS FOR RESOLVING AND DOCUMENTING ACTION.

